



# Educators' beliefs about English and languages beyond English: From ideology to ontology and back again

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper we propose that careful analysis of educators' ontological beliefs concerning English and other languages can be interpreted from their attitudinal discourse and can shed light on how potentially harmful ideological beliefs persist in educational systems. We explore the relationship between ideological and ontological beliefs about language(s) and argue that the ontological dimension has been overlooked in previous work on educator ideologies. Analysis of interview data from educators working with English as an Additional Language (EAL) students at seven primary schools in the north of England suggests a pervasive hegemonic ideological belief, consistent with the 'monolingual habitus', in which English is commonly positioned as 'language itself' and other languages are associated with stratified levels of cultural capital. From this analysis, we infer shared conceptualizations of English and other languages, and of nation and national identity, separately from the values associated with them. We address how a process of *ontological interpretation* can potentially be used in teacher development programmes to allow educators to understand and reassess their own ideologies and professional practices, challenging and more effectively resisting unhelpful narratives from those in positions of greater power.

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## 1. Introduction

Educators' attitudes to their students' linguistic resources and needs will be determined in large part by how well the educators know their students. However, these attitudes will be influenced at a more fundamental level by the linguistic and social ideologies to which the educators (more or less consciously) subscribe (Pettit 2011). This matters because, given the key role of teachers in the educational lives of students, their beliefs and attitudes will be formative in developing students' own attitudes, both positive and negative, towards their cultural and linguistic heritage (e.g. Conteh & Brock 2011; Gkaintartzi & Tsokalidou 2011; Lee & Oxelson 2006). Educators' beliefs and attitudes will impact on children as they implement particular and individualized language policies for the classroom (Ricento & Hornberger 1996). Particularly significant will be their attitudes about the extent to which they wish to facilitate the full use of students' linguistic resources (Bailey & Marsden 2017; Cunningham 2019; Rueda & García 1996).

In the research reported here we explore these issues from the perspective of teachers' beliefs and attitudes, both of which hold at

the level of the individual but are often also shared more or less closely with others. The difference between them can be viewed as essentially one of internal conviction versus outward-facing posture. Our understanding of beliefs coincides with Richardson (2003: 2), who defines them as 'psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true'. Attitude, in contrast, is defined by Gall, Borg & Gall (1996: 273) as 'an individual's viewpoint or disposition towards a particular 'object' (a person, a thing, an idea, etc.)'. To this we would add that attitudes derive from associated beliefs and, in a sense, are the 'application' of those beliefs.

The subset of beliefs and attitudes of interest in the present study are ideological and ontological. Ideological beliefs are those pertaining to ideologies, broadly understood as systems of ideas or meanings which constitute individual and group world views or social practices, often tied to value assignment, positioning or group interest, and therefore involving power relations (see Woolard 1998 for an overview). Van Dijk suggests that ideologies are inherently social, acquired, mediated, and propagated through discourse (2013: 179); but 'in everyday life, ideologies tend to be experienced and applied at [the] more specific level of ideologically based attitudes' (2013: 179). Ontological beliefs, by contrast, concern the physical, mental and social entities that are understood to exist (or not) in the world: their nature, status, and the

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relationships between them (Searle 1995; Lawson 2014). As we will elaborate below with respect to language, there is an interdependency between ideological and ontological beliefs, and the attitudes they give rise to. The beliefs can be more or less entrenched in individuals, can be held more or less consciously (depending on socialization, accumulated life experience, and degree of reflexivity), and can vary in degree of activation according to current context (Kroskrity 2004). Consistent with this variability and context dependency, contradictory beliefs may co-exist in both groups and individuals, as we shall see.

In general terms, teachers' beliefs may be separated into two main categories: (a) beliefs about learners/learning and teachers/teaching; and (b) beliefs about the language resources and practices to which learning and teaching contribute, and through which they are mediated. Most work on teacher beliefs (cf. Fives and Gill 2015) has concerned the former, but it is the latter category, which is our focus here. There are essentially two main bodies of literature on teachers' beliefs about English, both of which focus on attitudes to variation from 'standard' varieties (i.e., varieties which have been codified at least to some extent, are accorded social prestige, and tend to be idealized: cf. Armstrong & Mackenzie 2013). One body of literature focuses on teachers of English to speakers of other languages and is mostly concerned with their views about non-native Englishes as learning models and targets (e.g. Jenkins 2007). The other addresses the issue of mainstream teachers' attitudes to unstandardized<sup>1</sup> varieties in schools in the 'Anglosphere' (e.g. Baratta 2018; Blake & Cutler 2003). Straddling the two is research on attitudes to English(es) in bilingualism and translanguaging (e.g. Alfaro & Bartolomé 2017; Fitzsimmons et al. 2017; Rosa 2016). Moreover, discussions of teachers' ideological beliefs do not figure centrally in the teacher belief literature. According to Alfaro and Bartolomé (2017: 16),

teachers' beliefs and attitudes tend to be treated in the literature as overly psychologized apolitical constructs that [...] reflect personality types, individual values, and personal predispositions that have little to do with the larger political, ideological, social, and economic order.

Work on teacher *ontologies* of English—their beliefs about what English *is*—is almost completely lacking (Hall & Wicaksono 2020a).

In this article we propose that careful analysis of the (frequently unstable) ontological beliefs that can be interpreted from educators' attitudinal discourse can shed light on how ideological beliefs, often harmful ones, prosper in educational systems. We make our case in two stages. First, we present an analysis of the ideological beliefs inferable from interviews with educators at seven primary schools in the north of England (Cunningham 2017). The interviews were designed to elicit attitudinal discourse about English and languages beyond English<sup>2</sup>, in the educational context of English as an Additional Language (EAL)<sup>3</sup>. Interviews were analysed using the APPRAISAL framework, which uses networks of expanded sys-

temic functional categories to explore the language of evaluation (Martin 2000; Martin & White 2005). In a second step we reinterpret the ideological beliefs of stage 1 from the perspective of the fundamental distinction between conceptualizations of language as general human capacity and conceptualizations of language as a set of fixed codes indexing national identities (Otheguy, García & Reid 2015; Hall 2020). We use the resulting ideological/ontological synthesis to argue for the introduction of ontological reflection in teacher education and development and for encouraging a more questioning approach to entrenched ideological beliefs by adopting a Critical Language Awareness approach. The study thus addresses three research questions. The first two, enquiring into the educators' ideological and ontological beliefs, allow us to pose and address the main question regarding the relationship between the two:

- 1 What does an analysis of the attitudinal discourse<sup>4</sup> of primary school educators in a UK context illuminate about their ideological beliefs regarding English and the languages beyond English of their students?
- 2 What does a re-interpretation of the discourse data suggest about educators' ontological beliefs about English and other languages in the light of their ideological beliefs?
- 3 What is the nature of the relationship between the ideological and ontological beliefs identified in the discourse data?

The paper is organized as follows. In the remainder of this introductory section we discuss language ideologies relevant to the EAL context and examine how ideologies and ontologies are related, arguing that the ontological dimension has been overlooked in previous work. The next section provides an overview of the research context and data analysis framework. The central section presents an analysis of extracts of the interview data to infer prevalent ideological beliefs. Following that we deconstruct these ideological beliefs to postulate the conceptualizations of English and other languages, and of nation and national identity, that the beliefs might imply. In doing so, we identify the values that educators associate with these conceptualizations. We then return to the relationship between ideology and ontology in the context of our findings and consider the merits of the interpretations advanced. We conclude by addressing how ideological reflection and ontological deconstruction can potentially be used in teacher development programmes to empower educators to challenge the unhelpful and entrenched beliefs about language that are perpetuated in the nationalist and populist discourses of the current political landscape.

### 1.1. Language ideologies

At the most general level, ideologies are world views: sets of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours which develop in individuals through socialization into cultural groups. But for some scholars, ideologies are just those world views which evolve to serve the acquisition or maintenance and extension of power within, or over, the groups they operate in (Eagleton 1991: 5). In this more specific sense, they can support hegemonic social structures and, conversely, can motivate resistance to and/or rejection of hegemony. The powerful social leverage they give rise to is possible because of their entrenched nature (Sharpe, 1974; Weaver, 2019). This is reflected in a naturalizing effect, whereby the content of ideological beliefs is held to be part of the natural state of the world—and this, we contend, becomes an ontological issue. Ideologies also inevitably lead to normative effects, as a result of which only certain behaviours and practices may be perceived to be legitimate.

<sup>4</sup> By this we mean those parts of the participants' discourse that contain lexicogrammatical elements that can be described or analysed as pertaining to attitude expression

<sup>1</sup> Idealizations of the 'standard' variety are perpetuated in part by the ambiguity of the word *standard*, which can refer to an unmarked case ('standard practice') or a measure of quality ('below standard'). Given that the term *non-standard* is often taken to imply the second sense, we prefer the term *unstandardized* (cf. Siegel 2010).

<sup>2</sup> *Languages beyond English* is used here as a more positive term than some of the alternatives, which can seem dismissive in tone or problematic in other aspects. See Cunningham (2018) for fuller discussion.

<sup>3</sup> The term *English as an Additional Language* (EAL) is the standard acronym in the UK education system. The Department for Education (2018a: 10) states that '[a] pupil is recorded to have English as an additional language if she/he is exposed to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English. This measure is not a measure of English language proficiency or a good proxy for recent immigration'.

Consistent with post-structuralist views (Bourdieu 1977; Eagleton 1991), we recognise that language plays a special role in all ideologies, as the medium through which they are created, distributed, and sustained. It is also part of the content of the two overarching power-related ideologies of *elitism*, which seeks to reinforce hegemonic power, and *egalitarianism*, which seeks to (re)distribute this power more equally (Armstrong & Mackenzie 2013: 24). One of the best-understood and pervasive elitist language ideologies is the 'standard language' ideology, to which there are essentially two parts (Milroy 2001). The first is the belief in a 'standardized form' which is fixed, invariant, uniform—and happens to correspond to the usage of the elites. A corollary of this is that because other forms are not fixed and differ from the standard form, then they do not 'count', and the standard variety is 'the language' (cf. Armstrong & Mackenzie 2013: 16–18). Unstandardized varieties are hence often seen as deviations from or approximations to the standard variety. It is only a short step from this to the second part of the ideology, the attribution of intrinsic value to the standard variety: it is believed to be superior on both linguistic and non-linguistic grounds (better able to convey meaning clearly, more logical as a system, more mellifluous, etc.). People are commonly unaware that the value is one of social prestige transferred from the high status of the user groups to the linguistic system derived from their usage, rather than any intrinsic attributes of the system itself (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985; Weaver 2019).

Haugen (1966: 928) argued that the 'standard language' ideology emerged as a natural consequence of the national ideal which 'demands that there be a single linguistic code by means of which communication [within the nation] can take place'. It is thus part of the historical process of consolidating and sustaining the power of elites at the level of nation. National ideologies are inextricably enmeshed with language ideologies, as argued extensively by both political historians (e.g. Anderson 1983) and linguists (e.g. Harris 1981; Haugen 1966). The 'invention' of named, standardized languages (Joseph 2004; Makoni and Pennycook 2007) parallels the social construction of nations and national identities (e.g., Anderson's [1983] concept of nations as 'imagined communities'). This leads naturally to a second language ideology, that of 'one nation, one language', which works hand in hand with the 'standard language' ideology (Piller 2015). According to the 'one nation, one language' ideology, 'the (standard) language' is the naturally legitimate national language, to the exclusion of other languages used in the national territory, thus marginalizing them and reinforcing the monolingual habitus. For English, Fortier (2017: 5) astutely points out that '[t]he one-nation-one-language logic is shored up by the naturalised status of 'English as an international language', which deterritorialises English and deems it the property of the world and of whomever chooses to acquire it [...]'. Although it seems paradoxical, the very 'worldiness' [sic] of English 'as natural, equal and to the benefit of all' (5) reinforces claims to the 'naturalness' of monolingual use of English in (so-called) Anglophone nations.

As is the case with many, perhaps most, hegemonic ideologies, state education systems play a central role in sustaining the 'standard language' and 'one nation, one language' ideologies, and educators are the (often unwitting) agents in the process. Rydell (2018), for example, observes a silencing effect on adult migrants in Sweden due to self-surveillance caused, in part, by worries over transgressing norms of linguistic correctness and the judgements of others, particularly teachers. As Gogolin (1997: 42) observed, 'the monolingual orientation which can be observed among teachers in [...] European schools is an intrinsic element of their professional "habitus" as members of the nation state school system'.

Ideologies pertaining to a 'standard' form of a 'national' language are also intersectional in their nature, in that race and eth-

nicity, as well as socio-economic status, are factors in the construction of the 'standard language' ideology (Grainger & Jones 2013; Lippi-Green 2012; Reay et al. 2007). Many children (and teachers) in educational contexts across the globe experience the negative impact of being situated at the intersection of one or more of these relevant social constructs (Flores & Rosa 2015). In the UK, the context of the present study, socio-economic status tends to be a more dominant factor in the construction and perpetuation of the 'standard language' and 'one nation, one language' ideologies than is race in the USA (Milroy & Milroy 1999: 153–156); however, it is rarely openly discussed as a factor in policy or practice in teachers' discourses (Cunningham, 2020).

## 1.2. Ideologies and ontologies

Many scholars maintain that ideologies can be so deeply entrenched in a social group that they are completely taken for granted, held unwittingly and rarely available to conscious contemplation (cf. Bourdieu's [1977] notion of *doxa*). Indeed, some argue that ideologies are really just ways of constructing, experiencing, and organizing meanings and meaning relations (i.e. systems of signification; cf. Woolard 1998: 7). From this perspective, consistent with Bakhtin's (1981) notion of *heteroglossia*, ideologies can be interpreted as collective elements of social practice, discursively constructed and maintained. Jaffe (2009), for example, argues that ideological beliefs can be understood as deriving from the 'fixing' and 'naturalization' (8–9) of the stances speakers adopt in interaction, through uptake and alignment, leading to 'patterns of collective positioning' (18). Understood thus, language ideologies can be displayed as 'metasociolinguistic stances' (17–18), which may be enacted either overtly (e.g. through a comment on a non-native speaker's 'good English') or covertly (e.g. an assumption that their English might not be as 'good' as a native speaker's). As Kroskrity (2004) points out, however, speakers' awareness of their ideological positioning may vary both inter-individually (e.g. according to a person's degree of reflexivity) and intra-individually (e.g. according to the particular 'ideological sites' of social practice in which the beliefs are deployed).

Thus, although ideology is ubiquitous (Norval 2013), particular ideological beliefs are variably distributed, acknowledged, and entrenched across individuals and communities. This point is made clearly by Van Dijk (2013), who understands ideological beliefs to be 'forms of social cognition' (176) but argues that they are 'typically *not* shared and taken for granted by the whole sociocultural community' (177). Furthermore, it appears that competing ideological beliefs can be entertained by the same individual, even within the same ideological site (Fitzsimmons-Doolan et al. 2017; Weaver 2019). According to Van Dijk (2013), such individual variation is to be expected: 'Since [...] individual people may be members of various ideological groups, their experiences (mental models) may feature—sometimes contradictory—personal opinions and other beliefs as influenced by different ideologies' (179). These mental models will be 'influenced by personal biography, personality, and current context' (180).

If ideological beliefs can involve naturalization and entrenchment, constituting part of social cognition, yet are subject to inter- and intra-individual and community variation, then this raises the question of where the line is to be drawn between the ideological and the ontological—where the latter concerns the issue of what entities are believed to exist in the world, their nature, and how they relate to other entities. Rumsey (1990: 346, cited in Kroskrity 2004: 496), defined language ideologies as 'shared bodies of common-sense notions about the nature of language in the world'. Yet, we would argue that 'notions about the nature of language' are fundamentally ontological. Similarly, Woolard (1998: 6) pointed out that the 'piecemeal and internally contradictory' na-

ture of ideologies may lie in 'the conceptual model of the world or in the world which is accurately modeled'—again suggesting an intimate relationship between ideology and ontology. The conceptualization of ideology as intrinsically one of institutional illusion or deception, particularly in political treatments (Norval 2013), also highlights the ontological dimension of ideology. Recognising the importance of this dimension, Seargeant (2008) identified three elements which must be reconciled in understanding the role of ideology in 'language regulation' (applied linguistic practices) involving 'English within a globalized context'. One is the cultural and historical circumstances within which the language operates ('internal' ideology). Another is the rationale of the research or intervention ('external' ideology). The third element is the ontological status of the language itself: 'In both cases it is the way that the 'English language' (and, to a lesser degree, 'language in general') is conceptualized that forms the focus of [the] ideology' (219).

In an overlooked publication from several decades ago, Sharpe (1974) argued that '[a]ny comprehensive world-view constitutes an ideology [...]: such a world view will contain both an ontology and a set of values' (55). We believe that this explicit recognition of the bipartite nature of ideologies as 'ontologies plus values' is a useful one which has not been duly recognised in previous research. It is this that underpins, for example, Milroy's (2001: 530) description of the 'standard language' ideology as consisting of a belief in a 'standardized form' (ontological commitment) and 'the way in which speakers think about their own language and about 'language' in general' (value attribution).

The role of value attribution in distinguishing between ontology and ideology has not figured prominently in the literature since Sharpe (1974), although it is indirectly and implicitly recognised in some work. An example is the following comment by Nightingale and Cromby (1999: 8), about realist and relativist epistemologies in social constructionism: 'Which aspects of the world are to be relativised and which "real-ised" is a choice typically shaped by moral, political or pragmatical precepts, not epistemology or ontology.' In other words, writers' ideological positioning with respect to value-laden 'moral, political or pragmatical precepts' (corresponding to Seargeant's [2008] notion of 'external ideology') is distinct from underlying claims about what we believe to exist and the basis for those beliefs. But although distinct, ontological commitments and value-laden ideologies are interdependent. Heller (2007: 14), for example, commenting explicitly on the ontological position of researchers, points out that if concepts like community, language, and identity are socially constructed, rather than natural and bounded (an ontological issue), then there will be variation in beliefs about what *counts* as a community, language, or identity, and who can claim them (an ideological issue).

If, as we saw earlier, people can appear to orient to competing ideologies at the same time, this raises the question of the possibility of co-existing and competing ontologies in a single person. Although ontological relativism has been recognised in the domain of scientific theory formation (Quine 1968), there is little research on individual ontologies. In education studies, perhaps naturally, there has been extensive study of personal epistemologies, but not of personal ontologies (Olafson & Schraw 2010: 516). The little data that has been reported seems to confirm that teachers, at least, can hold and express competing ontological commitments, depending on contextual factors. Olafson and Schraw (2006) investigated US teachers' epistemological and ontological beliefs and world views, asking them to situate themselves on a four-quadrant scale with respect to realist and relativist views. The data suggested that they tended to self-identify as relativists, yet in interviews they reported realist classroom practices. Similarly, Hall et al. (2017), reported interview data with Chinese EFL teachers in which they explored

their ontological beliefs about the nature of English. They observed a disjunction between conceptualizations of English as a subject taught and learnt in the classroom and as a set of resources for communication outside the classroom.

In sum, the ideological and ontological beliefs of educators are powerful driving forces in professional practice but (the latter at least) are underexplored in applied linguistic research. It is this recognition that provides the main rationale for the present project. The applied linguistic objective pursued here is to help educators make a difference to multilingual students' lives during their time in schools. We argue that to do so, educators should be encouraged to develop (more) clarity about both their individual language ideologies, and the ontological beliefs and associated values which underpin them. They could then reflect on their discourse and practice, potentially change their beliefs, and thus become better enabled to adapt their professional practice to the realities of their local contexts.

## 2. Research context

Children who use languages beyond English as part of their linguistic repertoires have long been a presence in UK classrooms. However, over the past decade or so there has been a dramatic increase in the population of students classified as 'EAL' in mainstream primary schools, with the number almost doubling in England and Wales since 2006 to over 20% (Department for Education, 2018a). With the radical changes in classroom make-up caused by the 'largest peacetime migration in our history' (Finch & Goodhart 2010: 6) following the accession of the former Eastern Europe bloc countries to the European Union, many educators who had never had this experience before were faced with supporting emergent bilingual children. Migrant workers had begun to settle in cities and towns that had hitherto been perceived as entirely monolingual English. Whether or not this perception was actually justified, the fact remains that the EAL population in many classrooms increased dramatically in the first ten years of the new millennium. This has resulted in numerous studies seeking to understand how professionals are dealing with these demographic shifts in their classrooms (e.g. Ainscow et al. 2007; Murakami 2008). Teachers are often strongly influenced by culturally inherited political discourses and in contrast to the situation elsewhere (for example in the USA where bilingual education programmes can receive official support), UK teachers are particularly constrained by education policies and mandated curricula that have largely rendered languages beyond English invisible since the mainstreaming policies of the 1980s (Franson 1999).

### 2.1. Research design

The discursive data analysed here are drawn from a larger project undertaken between 2011 and 2012 (Cunningham 2017). 32 educators' attitudinal discourse was audio-recorded during interviews (semi-structured in stage 1 and unstructured in stage 2). These participants represented seven primary schools across the north of England and a broad range of roles. The semi-structured interviews were designed to elicit discussion around the provision of support for children classified as EAL and about the role of home languages in the school. The unstructured interviews conducted one year later were designed to allow participants to explore more freely what they believed were the most pertinent aspects of working with children and families with varying languages beyond English. Whilst the use of open questions and limited prompts allowed participants to take the lead in discussion, the interview context remains a site of co-construction, and the presence of an



**Table 1.**

Participant and interview details (BLA = Bilingual Learning Assistant; HLTA = Higher Level Teaching Assistant; LA = Local Authority).

School	Participant	Role	Language(s)	Age	Interview duration
1	Thomas	Head teacher	English	50+	43m01s (Stage 2) 53m38s (Stage 1)
	Jenna	EAL Coordinator	English/Urdu	20-30	27m15s (Stage 1)
2	Kelly	EAL Coordinator	English	40-50	31m05s (Stage 2) 33m43s (Stage 1)
	Taliba	BLA	English/Punjabi	20-30	28m51s (Stage 2)
	Habib	BLA	English/Punjabi	20-30	27m37s (Stage 1)
	Oraiba	BLA	English/Punjabi	30-40	"
	Caroline	Deputy head	English	40-50	07m40s (Stage 2)
	Marie	Class teacher	English	30-40	26m21s (Stage 2)
	Sheila	Head teacher	English	50+	18m18s (Stage 2) 20m12s (Stage 1)
	Tessa	Class teacher	English	20-30	24m38s (Stage 1)
	Sarah	Deputy head	English	30-40	42m33s (Stage 2)
	Katherine/Keely	Class teacher	English	30-40	20m54s (Stage 1)
3	Katrina	Head teacher	English	40-50	21m40s (Stage 1)
	TA1/	Teaching assistant	English	30-50	43m46s (Stage 1)
	TA2/	Teaching assistant	English	"	"
	TA3/	Teaching assistant	English	"	"
	TA4	Teaching assistant	English	"	"
	Irene	Head teacher	English	50+	29m03s (Stage 2) 28m01s (Stage 1)
	Ida	Class teacher	English	20-30	21m00s (Stage 1)
	Luke	Deputy head	English	50+	26m02s (Stage 2)
5	Karen	SEN Coordinator	English	40-50	19m17s (Stage 2)
	Helen	Family Liaison	English	40-50	21m02s (Stage 2)
	Kate	Class teacher	English	30-40	42m32s (Stage 2)
	Lucy	HLTA/ EAL Coordinator	English	30-40	53m55s (Stage 2)
6	Fiona	Nursery teacher	English	40-50	15m27s (Stage 1)
	Melanie	Class teacher	English	20-30	09m08s (Stage 1)
	Linda	Class teacher	English	20-30	09m44s (Stage 1)
	Louise	Class teacher	English	30-40	06m51s (Stage 1)
	Tina	Head teacher	English	50-60	51m04s (Stage 1)
7	Theresa	Specialist EAL	English	40-50	32m52s (Stage 2)
LA	Margaret	Specialist EAL	English	40-50	"

'outsider' in the school context allowed for interviewees to explore topics that they rarely had the chance to consider. As will be discussed later, this can lead to attitudes actually forming and shifting during the interview process.

Table 1 provides a full breakdown of the participants and the interviews, including age bracket and languages used in daily life. Participants were drawn from schools in one of the northern English regions with the lowest EAL populations, as well as from one with the highest. Typical of the UK context (Department for Education 2018b), participants would largely describe themselves as white and monolingual (with many also studying languages other than English at school), a representation issue that has been discussed in the academic and professional literature for some time (e.g. McEachron & Bhatti 2005) and one that makes it more challenging to discuss the data presented here through an intersectional lens. The participants are a relatively homogeneous group, despite a high level of diversity of languages spoken by members of their school communities. Schools 1, 2 and 5 were in areas where Punjabi, Urdu and other South Asian languages were most numerous. However, School 1 was also beginning to experience an increase in children speaking Eastern European languages, particularly Czech and Hungarian due to the increase in the Roma population in that region. School 3, located in the suburbs of a northern university city, had a wide range of languages spoken with no one dominant language group. This diversity, albeit with smaller numbers, was also the case in School 4, although Polish was the dominant language beyond English here. School 6, with the smallest EAL population, was (at the time of the study) largely focused on the Tamil-speaking group of children recently arrived in the UK from Sri Lanka. All names used are pseudonyms.

## 2.2. Interview analysis framework

Transcripts of interview data were analysed using APPRAISAL (Martin 2000; Martin & White 2005). The APPRAISAL framework is an approach that extends Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics into a framework to explore, describe and explain how language is used to express attitudes, to evaluate and to judge. The principal category within APPRAISAL for this type of analysis is that of ATTITUDE. According to Martin and White's (2005) description of the framework, the category involves the semantic regions of AFFECT ('registering positive and negative feelings': 42), JUDGEMENT ('attitudes towards behaviour, which we admire or criticise, praise or condemn': 42), and most pertinently for us, APPRECIATION ('evaluations of semiotic and natural phenomena, according to the ways in which they are valued or not in a given field': 43). It is possible to explore how participants position themselves and relate to each other and the wider society using the attendant analytical categories of GRADUATION (locutions which "graduate" either the force of the utterance or the focus of the categorisation by which semantic values are identified': 94) and ENGAGEMENT ('locutions which provide the means for the authorial voice to position itself with respect to, and hence to 'engage' with, the other voices and alternative positions construed as being in play in the current communicative context': 94). The framework is particularly apt for our purposes because of its analytic focus on value attribution, the element which, following Sharpe (1974), we suggest distinguishes ideological from ontological beliefs.

Interview transcripts were coded for lexical and grammatical choices which express the different categories of the APPRAISAL framework. A representation and illustration of the ana-

ATTITUDE	AFFECT (relating to emotions)	± HAPPINESS	...a few <b>tears</b> at first
		± SECURITY	It's going to be quite <b>daunting</b>
		± SATISFACTION	... so we're very <b>pleased</b> with that
		± DESIRE	... and they <b>want</b> to come in and help
	JUDGEMENT (relating to behaviour)	± NORMALITY	I think they're really <b>lucky</b>
		± CAPACITY	...and they <b>can't</b> speak English
		± TENACITY	People work <b>hard</b> here
		± VERACITY	I didn't <b>believe</b> her
		± PROPRIETY	... and they <b>should be</b> helped to have an understanding...
	APPRECIATION (relating to things we make/perform and natural phenomena)	± REACTION	...it was a <b>lovely</b> day
		± COMPOSITION	He speaks quite <b>clearly</b>
		± VALUATION	It's more <b>effective</b> to train a room full of people
ENGAGEMENT	HETEROGLOSSIC		when I've talked to like <b>SENCOs in other schools</b>
	MONOGLOSSIC		<b>I think</b> it's important
GRADUATION	FORCE (raise/lower)	QUANTIFICATION	there's going to be <b>loads of</b> parents coming in
		INTENSIFICATION	...at a <b>very</b> superficial level
	FOCUS (sharpen/soften)		...managing finances and budgeting <b>and stuff...</b>

Fig. 1.. A selective overview of systems and categories in the APPRAISAL framework (Martin and White 2005), with examples from the interview data.

lytical framework as we apply it here can be seen in Fig. 1. A short example of coding in practice is given in the following extract:

Lucy: dad **could speak** [judgement: capacity+]  
 (.) mum **couldn't** [judgement: capacity-] (..)  
 maybe [focus graduation: soften] it is a cultural  
 thing (.) dads **can** [judgement: capacity+] all  
 [high force graduation: quantification] **speak** (.) mums  
**can't** [judgement: capacity-]

Following Talmy (2010: 128), we view our interviews as social practices in which telling elements of participants' beliefs emerge, rather than as research instruments which yield a monolithic, quantitatively evidenced 'truth'. By resisting the temptation to count and compare tokens of coding types, we acknowledge the multiple realities of which our interview data represent a (significant) part. The validity of our interpretation was substantiated by participant/member checking of audio files and transcripts, and an inter-rater reliability test with a colleague experienced with the APPRAISAL framework. In the analysis of ideological beliefs below, reference is made to the relevant APPRAISAL category in SMALL CAPITALS where pertinent. For further details of the larger project in which this framework was more fully employed, see Cunningham (2017, 2019a, 2019b).

### 3. Ideological beliefs

The analysis suggested that two sets of inter-related ideological beliefs prevail in teachers' discourses, both of which involve attributions of positive and negative value to languages as community and individual resources, in terms of social status, naturalness, visibility, and desirability. The first set of beliefs, discussed in the next subsection, together reflect a hegemonic ideological stance towards English, deriving from the more general 'one nation, one language' ideology and Gogolin's (1997) notion (following Bourdieu) of the 'monolingual habitus'. They surface in discourse which positions English as primary, exclusionary of other languages—indeed as identical with 'language itself'. In line with this, the analysis suggests implicit endorsement of the belief that learning and using English as an additional language is characterized by deficit. The second set of beliefs, explored in the following subsection, follows perhaps inevitably from the first set, associating languages beyond English with different levels of cultural capital, thus implying a hierarchy of languages (with English at the top). The attribution of relative value to languages referenced in the discourse is shown to follow from educators' monolingual habitus, because it associates individual languages with individual communities in a one-to-one relationship, such that languages

inherit the perceived status of their (native) speakers (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985), and multilingualism as a natural state is denied.

### 3.1. Educators' ideological beliefs about English

Our analysis of the data suggested that many educators believe unquestioningly that English is (always) primary and, indeed, that other languages are excluded from the communicative domain in the UK, to the extent that they can be rendered completely invisible. For example, **Kelly**, the EAL co-ordinator at school 2, refers to 'people who've got no language at all when they come' and **Irene**, the Head at school 4, describes children 'coming in in year three with no language' (negative CAPACITY). Similarly, **Tina** refers to the brother of a student who 'accelerated learning very rapidly from no language [...] to lots of languages [...] within six to ten weeks'—the GRADUATION resources of raising INTENSIFICATION and QUANTIFICATION creating a strong (possibly hyperbolic) narrative here. The exclusionary stance is made explicit in the following comment:

**Luke:** we emphasize the importance of English because that's the dominant language in the country and for children to make progress and to do well in their future lives they need to be good communicators.

Luke made this comment in response to a question about what language he recommends for parents to interact with their children. His positioning of knowledge of English (positive CAPACITY) as *constitutive* of effective communication can be interpreted as a reflex of the societal 'one nation, one language' ideology, marginalizing the role of children's other languages.

Elsewhere in the data, English is similarly accorded unique value by being equated with language in general. **Thomas**, for example, refers to the possibility of EAL students transferring to schools where there are 'better' native-speaker role models and returning 'when they've got more language'. Likewise, **Marie** speaks of the possibility of children entering school with 'a lower level of language', and **Luke** mentions 'the difficulties that EAL children have in processing language'. There is evidence of the ideological stance throughout **Lucy's** discourse too. One example is her characterization of parents' English using the phrase 'their language was poor'. Another, more explicit, is contained in the following extract:

Dad was very good at English. Mum couldn't speak it at all and the little boy was somewhere in the middle, so we had something, and Michael the little Polish boy - Dad could speak, Mum couldn't. Maybe it is a cultural thing - Dads can all speak, Mums can't, mainly.

Notice that although the earlier part of the extract refers explicitly to the mother's knowledge of English (CAPACITY appraisal: 'Mum couldn't speak it'), the later part elides reference to English completely. By dropping the pronoun required if English were still in unique focus, Lucy seems to have shifted her stance to one in which lack of English is constructed as lack of ability to speak at all ('Dad could speak, Mum couldn't'). This echoes findings by Helot and Young (2002: 98) as well as Gkaintartzi and Tsokolidou (2011), whose research in French and Greek primary schools, respectively, points to similar claims that children lacking French or Greek 'cannot speak'. Anticipating the ontological argument to be developed in the next section, we can see that in these cases, and others across the data set, the national language and language in general are undifferentiated.

An unquestioned belief in the primacy of English and the negation of children's languages beyond English is not exhibited by all participants in the study, however. Asked about external pres-

sure on schools and students to achieve the transition to English quickly, two teachers in a group interview respond as follows:

**Katherine:** Well I think there's an expectation that people will—I'm not saying this is what I think but I think generally there is an expectation— that people will learn English and they will be able to do it

**Keely:** If you want to communicate you will have to speak our language type thing like.

These teachers are careful not to claim this exclusionary ideological belief for themselves (by using a heteroglossic ENGAGEMENT device to couch the PROPRIETY JUDGEMENTS). But the dominant ideological belief which emerges from the data is that English is primary, to the extent that it is constructed as 'language itself,' and lack of English is tantamount to lack of language. We believe that this positioning flows naturally from the 'one nation, one language' ideology, according to which each nation is naturally associated with only one language, and consequently monolingualism in that language is the norm.

An analysis of much of the participants' discourse suggests that they operate within a deficit/transitional model typical of societies ideologically imbued with a monolingual habitus (Blackledge 2001; Gkaintartzi & Tsokolidou 2011; Helot & Young 2002), with the expectation that the children should move towards exclusive use of English in the school as soon as possible. The notion of searching for problems, and the expectation of finding them, is reflected across the participants' discourse, a classic feature of a deficit model philosophy (Conteh & Brock 2011). In the excerpt below, **Luke**, having been asked about responsibility for educating children who speak languages beyond English in the school, immediately construes the issue as one in which problems must be identified and 'remedied' through 'interventions':

Everybody feels like they have a responsibility and so there's plenty of discussion within year groups and within key stages and within the whole staff so it's identifying problems and then trying to find ways to remedy the problems so the interventions are something that are ongoing all the time but they're in response to how we perceive the needs.

The notion of EAL 'traits' or 'problems' crops up across the data set. Even those children who are effective users of English, having achieved 'step 5' on the relevant assessment criteria, are identified as not having fully achieved the transition, as the following extract illustrates.

**Sarah:** Part of the identification process was actually going okay, some children are on step five who you might not notice, but when you look at their writing or when they get further up, you're going to notice. And we just need to hunt them down somewhere and for teachers to know who they are.

The realization that what looks like fluency in English can mask linguistic challenges in more academic English is not always explicitly made by participants. **Katrina** talks about a particular group of children who 'present as English first language speakers' (positive CAPACITY). The parents of this group clearly felt the negative societal valuation of their home language, to the extent that they listed it as English (not an uncommon practice). These children are fluent in English insofar as it is needed for their everyday interactions, but in this school, there were no plans to 'hunt them down' for additional language support.

The transition to English of parents too is regularly presented from a deficit perspective. **Irene**, commenting on changes she has witnessed during her career, reports that:

more of the mothers who are coming through are British educated and therefore they can communicate often better than their partners [...] whereas ten years ago we probably barely saw, you know, a mother whose first language was actually functioning as English and although they're bilingual, in a functionally—they can communicate very well with us.

Viewing parents' first language as now 'functioning as English' suggests that these mothers are in the process of multi-generational language shift (Hulsen, de Bot and Weltens 2002), but their being able to communicate well 'although' they are bilingual, suggests a deficit view.

### 3.2. Educators' ideological beliefs about languages beyond English

Educators' discourse concerning languages beyond English consistently suggests a value-laden hierarchy, with some perceived as bestowing more cultural capital than others. This is signalled overtly in comments by **Theresa**, who refers to 'languages which are more desirable', and more specifically to 'the language of business at the moment' and a 'language in vogue' (all positive APPRECIATION: VALUATION). In the data, knowledge of European languages traditionally taught in UK schools is positioned as more desirable than knowledge of the heritage languages of the children themselves. Those children whose home languages are in fact Western European in origin (particularly French speakers, a few of whom were mentioned across the data set), may find that their languages are more reflected in the school environment, as part of the languages curriculum, thereby affording a higher status to their linguistic identity. Positive CAPACITY judgements about multilingual children's prowess at learning French, illustrated in the following extract, are typical of teachers and managers interviewed, and of findings elsewhere (Department for Children, Skills and Families 2009).

**Luke:** We encourage the children to swi- or- not- it hasn't been the case over this last year, probably for several years, I've been er promoting French, so the children have been picking up French very easily 'specially the EAL children because they're already used to the idea.

Given the context, a possible reading of Luke's repair/restart in the first line is that he was about to say 'encourage the children to switch to French', rather than more neutrally 'promote French', suggesting the superiority of French to whichever language they were to switch from. And in any case, the verb *promote* clearly presupposes the attribution of status and value to French. This positioning of European languages above other languages beyond English is also reflected in the following comment from **Habib** on the status of English in postcolonial nations:

You only know if you read the histories in Pakistan, Bangladesh and all these countries, there English is still you know a language. [...] You know an absolute illiterate person from Pakistan would still know at least 100 words of English because if you go to the shop, the market, it's all over. Whereas a person coming from Poland might not. A person coming from Italy might not cos they've got their own language, they've not had that influence.

People from Italy (and Poland) having 'their own language' are contrasted here with people from Pakistan and Bangladesh who, we can infer, are being positioned as *not fully having* 'their own language' or having a language which is valued as lacking the functional richness of European languages.

For some, the hierarchy extends beyond European languages. The superiority of Urdu over other South Asian languages, especially, arises in a number of participants' discourse. A decision to

teach Urdu as a foreign language in one of the schools was celebrated as a way of improving self-esteem in the multilingual and emergent multilingual children and as a good token of multicultural education for school inspectors. But a comment from **Thomas** suggests that the selection of Urdu was influenced by the more elevated status it enjoys in migrant communities: 'the families see it as a kudos thing because in their country, speaking Urdu is considered to be one level up'. Note that 'one level up' leaves space for other languages above it, again lending credence to the inference that educators have an essentially hierarchical view of languages beyond English.

The distinction between 'more valuable' languages legitimized by being taught in schools and 'less valuable' languages brought to schools from home is apparent in the following extract, in which two bilingual learning assistants note the way their positive APPRECIATION of their own (heritage) multilingualism differs from their students':

**Habib:** Y'know we are working here because we've got another language. If I couldn't, I might not be working here! [...] so it's an asset an' y'know, people go an' learn Chinese an' you know the languages - you learn French but our children think 'oh no, you know, first language' (**Oraiba:** because they've all practically got it so they don't think it's...) (**Interviewer:** that it's anything special).

Chinese and French are languages which 'people go and learn' (as school subjects), whereas the children's own languages are perceived as less valuable assets in a multilingual combination.

The world views that emerge from these educators' discourse are generally consistent with the 'one nation, one language' ideology, according to which each country has a language with a privileged status (e.g. English in the UK, Urdu 'in their country') and, consistent with the monolingual habitus, each individual is a (native) speaker of one language. Individuals may wish, or be expected, to learn another language from the upper levels of the hierarchy in order to increase their cultural capital. But their cultural heritage—their core identity—is implicitly construed as monolingual, as illustrated in the following extracts, taken from responses to questioning about the desirability of children maintaining their home language(s).

**Lucy:** I think keeping their natural language is an extremely important characteristic. It's part of their culture, it's who they are, it's what they are, it's what makes them unique.

**Helen:** language is a big part of your own identity [...] it's like something you pass down like the colour of your eyes an' things like that an' I think it's a really important thing and for those children to not have it then I think will have an impact especially on how they're going to fit in to wherever they belong.

Striking in both these extracts is participants' use of expressions of positive VALUATION (alongside particularly INTENSIFYING GRADUATION resources) which suggest almost a genetic or biological association between the children's heritage language and their identities, emphasizing the naturalizing effect of the ideology. For Lucy multilingual students' first language is their 'natural language' (implying perhaps that English is unnatural for them) and for Helen it is 'pass[ed] down'. Losing their first language would effectively mean losing their identity, seen as tied to their 'culture' and 'wherever they belong'. The typical EAL child is thus constructed as being inevitably defined by their home language and the cultural identity this is seen to naturally entail. This helps explain the positioning of EAL children as essentially 'problematic', because they face the considerable challenge of a *transition from their natural state*.



We do not mean to suggest here that educators oppose use of the first language. Indeed, there are several instances where home language use is positively endorsed. But, crucially, it is nearly always constructed as having only qualified or subordinate worth. So, for example, **Kelly** states that parents 'should continue to use first language because that will improve the children's second language' (PROPRIETY JUDGEMENT). Likewise, **Sheila** comments on migrants' failure to understand that to learn English 'they need to preserve their first language' and **Marie** asserts that 'development of language in their first language [...] will help [...] cos they can then reinforce that in English as well'.

Elsewhere, children's use of languages beyond English is sanctioned for in-group rapport maintenance. **Lucy**, when asked about children's use of Tamil in the classroom, responded:

that would be absolutely promoted and very supported by the staff, but it would be made into a slight humour because the teacher would say they'd like to be able to understand what they're doing but it would be done in a very sensitive way and in a well-meaning way.

In another extract, she says:

I think it's heart-warming that they speak Tamil when they're together and sometimes you can see them in the playground. The two girls when they're together they're having a conversation which is excluding of other people, of course, because it is Tamil but because they're confident with it they can have such quick conversations with each other and just clear up an issue or talk about who is picking who up or who is coming for who. Then they're off and they're with their friends.

The attitude reflected here can be interpreted as one which values Tamil as part of the exotic but inscrutable 'other', as long as it is restricted to narrow social domains or is subject to external Anglophone supervision. The sense of a need to supervise the use of home languages in the school domain was also articulated by **Kelly** who says:

they've got to learn to use it appropriately so in our school at the moment there isn't a culture of it - of children being allowed to use it without there being a bilingual member of staff there to sort of oversee it.

Interestingly, Kelly is one of several educators to report a positive attitude to bilingualism in general terms. At an earlier point in the interview, when asked about her attitude directly, she responds 'I'm very into it and I value it', which in the light of her qualification above suggests the co-existence of competing ideological beliefs. But independently of educators' recognition of the intrinsic worth of students' home languages, transition to English is seen as a key focus by all participants in the study.

#### 4. Ontological beliefs

Our analysis of the discourse of primary school EAL educators in the north of England has inferred a dominant world view which aligns strongly with the 'one nation, one language' ideology within a monolingual professional habitus. In this section we attempt to deconstruct the ideological stances identified by teasing out the conceptualizations of English and other languages that they implicate, seeking to illuminate these personal ontological categories in the light of the values attached to them. Our ontological re-interpretation adopts a broadly post-structuralist orientation, in which conceptualizations can be contingent on circumstances rather than wholly predetermined and universal. Individuals will conceptualize as they do both as a function of macro-contextual aspects of the topic and setting (school, EAL, languages

beyond English, educator roles and attitudes) as well as micro-contextual aspects of the situation in which the discourses unfold. In this study, semi- and unstructured research interviews each follow unique co-constructed paths, sometimes covering issues that participants have not had the chance to discuss in depth before, especially in the schools with smaller populations of EAL children.

At the same time, we see ontological categories and the ideologies they are implicated in as mentally represented at some level. Although they emerge from immediate circumstances, often as the result of reflexivity or logogenesis (Martin 2000), they also regularly become sedimented through repeated experience as 'mental models' (Van Dijk 2013), becoming re-activated when similar circumstances arise. Thus, the personal ontological categories we identify below as being (re-)activated in educators' meaning-making in discourse may be mutually inconsistent, sometimes leading to indeterminate or blurred category boundaries when juxtaposed, yet nonetheless often equally deeply entrenched in long-term memory. For this reason, it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between (entrenched) ontological 'commitments' and (performative) 'stances'. Accordingly, in what follows, we use the more general term 'ontological belief'.

As a first step in identifying participants' ontological beliefs about English and other languages, we recognise the basic distinction between language conceptualized as a general phenomenon (and hence English[es] as instantiations of this) and language conceptualized as a collection of distinct named codes associated with different nations (of which English is one). English exists in the first sense by virtue of the existence of language as a human capacity and is independent of our awareness of it. In the second sense, English exists by virtue of the original existence of a group of people perceiving themselves as a nation, 'the English', and those who now trace a cultural lineage with this group (Hall, 2020).<sup>5</sup> Essentially the same distinction is drawn, from a translanguaging perspective, by Otheguy, García and Reid (2015: 291) in their discussion of idiolects vs (named) languages, in which they state: 'An idiolect is a linguistic object whose constitutive elements are lexical and structural units, whereas a language is a cultural object defined by place, memory, identity, history, and, of course, a socially given (though sometimes contested) name'. They go on to acknowledge (albeit implicitly) the ontological inconsistency of conflating the two, pointing out that '[a] question formulated about the former category cannot be answered in reference to the latter'.

In the following sub-sections, we elaborate on this fundamental distinction to provide an ontological re-interpretation of the ideological beliefs discussed earlier, again examining beliefs about English first, before moving on to languages beyond English.

##### 4.1. Educators' ontological beliefs about English

Our data suggest that the EAL educators in this study conceptualize the cognitive resources and social practices of language primarily and naturally in terms of the dominant national instantiation in England, i.e. English. The national conceptualization of English reflected in this ontological belief is ideologically associated with the attribution of privileged status (i.e. positive value) to the standard (native-speaker) variety, to the extent that unstandardized varieties are viewed as imperfect reflections of it and accord-

<sup>5</sup> In what follows we refer to 'the English' as a (perceived) national group, although of course the status and composition of this ontological category is likely to vary by individual and by situation as much as that of 'the English language' does. We use it, rather than 'British' for example, because this reflects our participants' usage, e.g. when Irene says 'they can speak perfectly good and functional English, but you would never think they are English' (see below).

ingly 'standing [ontologically] outside the language' (Haugen 1966: 924). We see this belief set reflected in our data, especially in references to the lack of suitable native-speaker role models for learners. **Thomas**, for example, says: 'if you look at the school where I am, my indigenous white children also have unenriched language'; **Fiona** states: 'Obviously as a teacher my aim is to make sure the children can speak English properly and there's some children even from this country that struggle to do that'; and **Kate** asserts (of 'white children') that 'to be honest their [...] English was as poor as the English second language [students]'. Categorized, we note, in racial as well as national terms (although not in terms of Socio-Economic Status, which may actually be the more relevant factor), these children are constructed as falling short of the teachers' conceptualization of 'the English language'. It follows that non-native, multilingual, varieties are even further dissociated from it. This very constrained conceptualization of English is referred to by Hall (2013, 2020) as N-English, where the 'N' suggests *named, national, normed, and native*. We can state this ontological belief as the following proposition:

A. The legitimate manifestation of language in England is N-English.

In more colloquial terms, what this amounts to is the belief that *Proper English people speak proper English*. This belief reflects Crowley's (1991: 2) identification of the issue of 'what is to count as 'proper English' in the realm of language' with 'more significant social questions, such as, 'who are the proper English?'. **Luke's** assumption that (proper) English is required by EAL students 'to be good communicators' is an example of a belief underpinned by this proposition.

Note that the proposition only pertains to 'English people'. This is because of the bidirectional relationship between national identity and national language inherent in the concept of nationhood, understood here as a cultural construct around which '[n]ational languages and identities arise in tandem' (Joseph 2004: 124). 'English people' are understood to be English, in part, because they speak English and they speak English because they are English; speaking English is a constitutive element of Englishness. A corollary of Proposition A is thus that 'non-English people' cannot have N-English because they do not belong to the relevant national identity category. In our data, for example, **Irene** says of Polish- and Russian-speaking parents: 'they can speak perfectly good and functional English, but you would never think they *are* English'. 'Foreign' cultural practices and origins are also taken to imply lack of English by some educators. **Kate** refers to 'the women with burkas and everything else like that—y'know that [...] don't speak any English' and **Thomas** cites his use of the expression 'they've just come off the plane' to mean 'they've got no English at all'. For these educators, dress style taken as identifying a person as 'non-English', and arrival from another country, both index 'non-English-speaking'.

In line with the currently dominant applied linguistic conceptualization of language as social practice (e.g. Canagarajah 2013), i.e. as a *process* as well as a resource, we recognise that English (and other semiotic) resources are developed, deployed and modified in the process of what may be called 'linguaging' (Jørgensen 2008; Joseph 2002). Accordingly, a commitment to Proposition A can result in a blurring of ontological category boundaries between the social construction of N-English on the one hand and English resources used for linguaging on the other, such that judgements about identity are confounded with judgements about language. We can capture the ontological beliefs underpinning educators' discourse on this point in the following proposition:

B. If 'non-English people' lack English, what they are lacking are resources for linguaging.

Or, in ordinary language, and taking Proposition A also into account: *In England, if you don't have English, you're linguistically impaired*. The notion of 'linguistic impairment' echoes other analyses of how EAL students are perceived in the UK. Piller (2016: 114–115), for example, discusses how a statutory assessment of early years children 'equates 'communication and language' with English, and with English only, [which] effectively devalues all other languages, associating them with language delay and a deficit view'. If the children lack linguistic resources in ('Standard') English and their languages beyond English are delegitimized, then they are in a state of what Rosa (2016) has denominated 'languagelessness'. This, we suggest, is the ontological belief imputable to **Irene** and **Kelly** when they describe children entering school without English as having 'no language at all', and to **Thomas**, **Marie**, and **Luke** when they question children's development, proficiency, and use of 'language', but when in fact only their English is in focus.

Similarly to what we saw in the ideological analysis, however, the belief is not universally reflected across the data. There is, for example, evidence of teacher recognition of English and languages beyond English as equal manifestations of a general language capacity. Consider, for example, **Keely's** and **Katherine's** observation of students' reactions to their peers' use of languages beyond English in the following extract:

**Keely:** But it's also good for the other children to listen to the different languages

**Katherine:** Oh I think it helps them so much and they were so confused they were saying I heard him talk I heard him talk he can talk and we were saying yes of course he can talk he just can't speak English [...]

Here **Katherine** reports how she made clear to native English-speaking students that because a student doesn't speak English doesn't imply that they lack language. **Sheila** similarly demonstrates sensitivity to students' language resources independently of any 'N-language' (Hall, 2013) in the following extract:

We have intervention groups running right from the Early Years right the way through to support children in developing language. But it's not specific to a language.

Consistent with our argument, we also see signs in the data of individual ontological shifts, suggesting albeit low-level and fleeting awareness of the distinction between English as N-English and English as cognitive resource used in linguaging. In the following extract, for example, **Lucy** appears to become aware of her commitment to Proposition A mid-utterance and then corrects it: 'his language was very poor when he first joined us in nursery, or his English was very poor, I should say'. In general, though, the educators' discourse tends to construe language in terms of English as a component of national identity.

#### 4.2. Educators' ontological beliefs about languages beyond English

As we saw in the discourse of **Lucy** and **Helen**, the students tend to be conceived in terms of their 'Non-English' identities, even by teachers like **Katherine** who, while stressing the need for students to learn English for social integration, states that 'I feel it's very important that they keep [...] *who they are*' (our emphasis). Consistent with the 'one nation, one language' ideology, this leads educators to associate students' languages beyond English with these (national) identities and the values they associate with them. The attribution of value here is therefore inevitably relative, with 'more favoured' nations (e.g. European ones) being associated with more highly valued languages beyond English, and national languages (e.g. Urdu) more valued than regional ones. This conceptualization of languages beyond English in terms of national identity

limits educators' disposition to view them as part of students' idiolectal repertoires for languaging—as evidenced by participants like **Luke** who identifies the ability to communicate effectively only with English. This can be captured in the following proposition, which mirrors for languages beyond English what Propositions A and B state regarding educators' views of the status of English:

C. The languages of 'non-English people' are N-languages of the nations they are identified with, rather than idiolectal resources for languaging.

In ordinary language: *In England, if you're not English and have other languages, they're components of your identity, not your linguistic ability.* Again, this proposition captures how ideological stances are built on underlying ontological beliefs, with values attached. In the only contexts where languages beyond English are viewed as part of linguistic ability, i.e. where they are seen as assets for in-group rapport maintenance or the transition to English, the underlying negative values derived from the identity-driven conceptualization are still present, as we saw with **Lucy's** comments on Tamil.

An alternative to Proposition C is that, when other languages are contemplated independently of students' languages beyond English, they may be conceived in terms which are divorced from the cognitive resources of individuals (idiolectal repertoires), the social practices in which these resources are deployed (languaging), and the concept of national identity to which they are conventionally recruited (N-language). It is in this sense that languages can be viewed as school subjects, e.g. part of the 'Modern Foreign Languages' curriculum, bodies of knowledge which can be deliberately described and studied as abstract constitutive norms (Searle 1969: 33–37). Such descriptions, although based on records of languaging (e.g. corpora), are more typically conditioned in practice by implicit reference to the regulative norms of N-language (Hall, 2020). This leads to their use as measures of accuracy/correctness in the educational assessment of language proficiency. Thus, named languages as linguistic descriptions may be subsumed into the ontological category of English as a component of national identity. This conceptualization may underpin (or at least reinforce) the belief referenced by **Luke** and **Habib**, that French and Chinese are more legitimate (valuable) languages than the students' own languages beyond English, because they are learned through formal education by 'English people'. The corresponding proposition would, then, be:

D. The languages of 'non-English people' that 'English people' learn (through education) are systems of regulative norms, rather than idiolectal repertoires for languaging.

Expressed more colloquially: *In England, other languages you learn are school subjects, independent of social identity and use.*

A corollary of Proposition D is the following, which brings us back to English:

E. The English that 'non-English people' learn (through education) is a system of regulative norms corresponding to N-English, rather than an idiolectal repertoire for languaging.

Again, in ordinary language, and filling in the implicit value: *In England, if you learn English but aren't English, your English is viewed in terms of how well it matches the linguistic system of the 'standard' variety, independently of effective use.* This ontological belief set may underpin educators' emphasis on gaps in students' assessed knowledge (cf. the comments by **Luke** and **Sarah**) and bolster the 'deficit model' view by quantifying how far they have progressed along the assumed transitional trajectory from their 'natural' L1 state to (actually unattainable) N-English norms. Note how this proposition conspires with Proposition B to damn the students either way: if they *lack* English, then they lack a functional idiolectal repertoire and are construed as linguistically deficient; if they *have* English,

then they will still be viewed as lacking N-English and so be construed as deficient in the appropriate norms and therefore unable to attain the associated national identity status.

## 5. Discussion

In the first stage of this study, we used the APPRAISAL framework to address Research Question 1: "What does an analysis of the attitudinal discourse of primary school educators in a UK context reveal about their ideological beliefs regarding English and the languages beyond English that their students bring to school?" We found that, although not universal, the interview data highlighted an overriding pattern of attitudinal discourse consistent with the 'one nation, one language' ideology, reflecting a monolingual professional habitus. Participants consistently attributed unique value to English, such that children's languages beyond English were marginalized and often rendered invisible. When languages beyond English were in focus, they tended to be viewed in terms of a hierarchy of value (below English), and as aspects of students' core identity, such that their learning of English was positioned as inherently problematic and characterized by deficit. These beliefs thus align with an overarching ideology in which people are naturally monolingual in a single national language (the 'one nation, one language' ideology). Consistent with this, particular languages inherit value from the perceived status of the nation and/or people they are associated with.

There has been little work on the beliefs about English and languages beyond English held by educators who are not teachers of English, and none that we are aware of which isolates the attribution of value (in terms of social status, naturalness, visibility and desirability) in the kind of detail afforded by the APPRAISAL framework. The research reported here adds to scholarly understandings of the different degrees of entrenchment of, and resistance to, hegemonic language ideologies in the educational contexts of the global North. Our findings confirm those of Bailey and Marsden (2017), conducted with EAL primary school educators in the same region of the UK, regarding the primacy of English and the concomitant marginalization of languages beyond English. They also echo research on the beliefs of teachers of migrant students in non-Anglophone European countries, in which home languages can be effectively erased (Gkaintartzi & Tsokolidou 2011; Helot & Young 2002). But our findings contrast with those of US research with teachers in bilingual education contexts. Unlike Fitzsimmons et al. (2017), for example, we found little evidence for languages beyond English being valued as endowments within a multilingual repertoire. And unlike Alfaro and Bartolome (2017) and Henderson (2017), we found no evidence of counter-hegemonic ideological orientations. Although it may be that attitudes have changed since our data was collected, this seems unlikely in the UK context, given political shifts to the right and such events as the referendum on leaving the European Union. This discrepancy points to the importance of institutional, local and national education policies and philosophies, as well as demographics and politics, in shaping teacher beliefs (Blake and Cutler 2003; Henderson 2017).

Much work on teachers' beliefs about English learners and users has exposed how they are conflated with other identity categories such as race, ethnicity, nationality/legal status and socio-economic status (e.g. Alfaro & Bartolomé 2017; Flores & Rosa 2015). But as we pointed out in the introductory section, there is almost no research about teachers' underlying beliefs about the nature of the English language, other languages, and language itself. Moreover, previous research has not specified how English and other languages are being conceptualized, by either researchers or research participants (cf. Seargeant 2008). It is here that our study makes its principal contribution.



In the second stage of the research, we re-interpreted the ideological findings surfaced at stage 1 in terms of the ontological categories of English and other languages which appear to underpin these beliefs, addressing Research Question 2: "What does a re-interpretation of the discourse data suggest about the ontological beliefs about English and other languages that can be imputed to educators, in the light of the analysis of their ideological beliefs?". The approach adopted, distinguishing English as idiolectal resource for social practice on the one hand, from English as component of national identity on the other (cf. Hall 2013, 2020), allowed us to explore the ways in which the ideological stances identified in stage 1 presuppose distinct conceptualizations of English and other languages, and language in general. We found that educators conceptualize English in conflicting ways depending on the perspective taken (in line with Van Dijk 2013). The default position, which we may speculate represents an entrenched ontological commitment for many of the educators interviewed, holds that the legitimate manifestation of language in England (understood as that of 'English people') is English viewed as its 'standard' native-speaker variety. This position, formulated as Proposition A, is itself ontologically inconsistent, in that English is viewed not in terms of the actual linguistic resources which serve communicative functions, but rather as an index of national identity (N-English). The corollary to this, Proposition B, reverses the ontological categories for 'non-English' people, including the students in focus here, by viewing a lack of (competence in) English in terms of a lack of a functional idiolectal repertoire. Further complexifying the ontological terrain, competence in English for 'non-English' people is inconsistently viewed (and therefore measured) in terms of idealized monolithic descriptions of N-English (Proposition E). This interpretation follows from participants' overall ontology of named languages, in which languages beyond English are viewed as components of identity when pertaining to their native speakers (Proposition C), but as idealized linguistic systems when pertaining to English native-speaker learners (Proposition D).

Our main purpose in this research was to explore how ontological deconstruction could shed light on educators' beliefs about language and languages, by teasing apart the conceptualizations from the values associated with them, thus exposing consistencies and contradictions implicit in their ideological beliefs and providing firmer purchase for ratification or contestation. In conducting the ontological deconstruction, we are recognising the need for research to pay balanced attention to (beliefs about) the language code, as well as the 'internal' and 'external' ideological framework in which the research is pursued, as argued by Sargeant (2008). Accordingly, research Question 3 asked: "What is the nature of the relationship between the ideological and ontological beliefs identified in the discourse data?". In most previous treatments, the distinction between questions of ideology and ontology has either been left unrecognised or simply ignored. Where it has been addressed, it has typically been presented in terms of a dichotomy: either ideological or ontological. For Pennycook (2007: 94), for example, '[named] languages are political rather than ontological categories'. For Flores and Rosa (2015: 152), 'notions such as "standard language" [...] must be conceptualized as racialized ideological perceptions rather than objective linguistic categories'. An alternative is to equate ideology and ontology at the subjective level. Canagarajah (2020: 309), for example, argues that:

Constructs such as English, German, or Spanish, with their own lexical features, can be explained as ideological. That is, these labels and the lexical corpus that constitutes them are defined by people's assumptions and attitudes. These language ideologies give shape to what constitutes their language.

The interpretation afforded by our ontological approach confirms the view that ontologies of English and other languages are

subjective and influenced by ideologies. However, our view (following Sharpe 1974) distinguishes what is believed to exist (ontological categories) from the values associated with those entities (ideological beliefs). Our interpretation extends Sharpe's (1974) view to recognise that ontological categories themselves can be created by ideological value attribution in separate ontological domains. The attitudinal data suggest that many educators have inconsistent conceptualizations of English, switching from English as idiolectal repertoire to N-English depending on the national identity category currently in focus (Propositions A, B and E). A parallel distinction is apparent for conceptualizations of other languages (Propositions C and D). We have argued that these ontological beliefs about language are determined by ontological beliefs about the nature of nations and national identity, and thus inherit the ideologically-driven values that inhere within them, leading to the naturalization of value-imbued (ideological) beliefs about language(s) as N-languages and as school subjects. In EAL contexts, the issue of national identity is inevitably foregrounded, as our data amply illustrate, and this shapes the ontological beliefs manifested.

## 6. Implications and conclusion

In attempting to separate ontological categories from the values attributed to them according to Sharpe's (1974) insight, we are adopting a specific applied linguistic position (part of our 'external' ideology, in Sargeant's [2008] terms), which aligns with the goals of Critical Language Awareness (CLA; Clark et al. 1991). In the words of Svalberg (2007: 296):

Other L[anguage] A[wareness] approaches are criticized by CLA proponents for presenting the existing sociolinguistic situation and ideologies embedded in the discourse as 'natural', thereby contributing to their perpetuation rather than, as CLA aims to do, to social change.

In line with CLA, Alfaro and Bartolomé (2017: 12) argue that 'it is crucial to explicitly help prospective bilingual teachers develop their ideological clarity in parallel with their pedagogical expertise'. For them, 'ideological clarity' comes with the development of 'critical skills that will enable [teachers] to deconstruct the so-called natural and commonsense negative perceptions they may hold about their low S[ocio-]E[conomic] S[tatus], immigrant, and other linguistic minority students' (15). We contend that an important part of this deconstruction will be reflection on the ontological status of language(s) as well as the values they are imbued with by top-down hegemonic narratives. As is very well understood, language ideologies like the 'standard language' ideology and the 'one nation, one language' ideology are deeply entrenched and are coupled with broader discourses and beliefs which perpetuate social injustice. One way to contest them, we suggest, is to start from the language end, in teacher development programmes, where attitudes have been shown to change as a result of targeted activities (e.g. Lee and Oxelson 2006; Wiese et al. 2017).

There are different ways that 'ontological clarity' may be fostered in teacher education. From an explicitly CLA perspective, Wiese et al. (2017) adapted anti-bias and anti-racist materials to address the negative effects of language ideologies in linguistically diverse classrooms in Germany, making them available as an online continual education course. Incorporating material to prompt ontological clarity could strengthen such a programme. Wallen and Kelly-Holmes (2017), working with EAL educators in Ireland, found that dialogic enquiry in teacher networks with an academic facilitator helped 'awaken' their awareness of bilingualism and bilingual development. Although neither the facilitator nor teacher participants touched on ideological or ontological issues, the process could easily be adapted to use the 'ordinary language' versions of



our five propositions as springboards for dialogue. Although change in teacher beliefs can happen through such in-service activities (Borg 2011), especially when collaborative (Schraw 2013), it is most likely to occur as a result of practitioner-initiated self-reflection.

We conclude with some recommendations for how our findings and the way we have theorized them may be used as prompts for such self-reflection. Adapting ideas that Hall and colleagues have used in their online course on conceptualizations of English for TESOL practitioners (Hall and Wicaksono 2020b; cf. Hall et al. 2013), we suggest that to help EAL educators develop greater 'ontological clarity', the first challenge will be for them to delink the ontological categories of language and nation, i.e. *speaking* English from *being* English, in order to interrogate Propositions A and C. To do this, educators could be provided with materials or activities which draw attention to the fact that: (a) not everyone who is English speaks L1 English (perhaps highlighting 'indigenous' English native users of British Sign Language; cf. Ladd 2003); and (b) not everyone who is English speaks L1 English the same way, and few use only 'Standard English' (e.g. by playing teachers recordings of themselves so that they notice their own departures from the norms: Godley et al. 2006).

Activities such as these could be used to raise the more directly ontological issue of the extent to which English (and other named languages) are monolithic or 'plurilithic' entities (Hall 2013; Pennycook 2009). In the aforementioned online course, Hall and colleagues have found a useful prompt for reflection to be the ambiguity of the word *rule*, as in 'the rules of English', using its origin in the Latin word *regula* to highlight the disambiguating partial synonyms *regulation* and *regularity* (cf. Hall forthcoming). Teachers appear to readily appreciate the difference between:

- rules as regulations, to which people are expected or mandated to conform, as in the regulative norms of N-English ('proper English'); and
- rules as regularities, which capture general patterns emerging from exposure and usage, as in the local and individual constitutive norms of idiolectal repertoires.

This appreciation would go some way towards allowing teachers to problematize Propositions D and E, by highlighting the limitations of viewing languages as subjects in which 'correctness' is expected and assessed (e.g. in terms of 'accuracy' on tests). Once the 'plurilithic' nature of English is in focus, the insights of translanguaging for pedagogy may be harnessed to tackle Proposition B, building on Seltzer's (2019) call to challenge the reified dichotomies of 'home' and 'school' languages, and named languages in general, recognising instead students' 'translingual sensibilities and translanguaging practices'. Finally, perhaps the most practical suggestion we can make for immediate action in the light of our findings is to ask teachers to critically reflect on the common practice in schools and elsewhere of using national flags as icons for the languages used by their students and local communities: this represents a simple way to reassess the ideologies and ontologies of language and identity taken for granted in inherited narratives from above.

## Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None

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